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AUTHOR Rutherford, William L.
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ABSTRACT

A research investigation on how teachers actually implement team teaching focused upon individual teachers and how they used the innovation. The research was based on the Concerns-Based Adoption Model. The model proposes eight Levels of Use and common to all these Levels are seven categories that represent behaviors a user at any level might be expected to demonstrate: knowledge, acquiring information, sharing, assessing, planning, status reporting, and performing. Through the use of personal interviews and limited observations, information about team teaching, or teaming, was collected from 411 teachers in 39 schools, ranging from those not involved in teaming to those who had been teaming for 5 or more years. A description is presented of the Level of Use patterns that were found. In this description, an outline presents the characteristic attitudes of users of an innovation at each level. Nine different patterns of teaming are described and briefly analyzed. The implications of the study for developing and implementing team teaching programs are discussed. (JD)

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William L. Rutherford
Project Associate
Procedures for Adopting Educational
Innovations/CBAM Project
Research and Development Center
for Teacher Education
Education Annex 3.120
The University of Texas
Austin, Texas 78712

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TEAM TEACHING -- HOW DO TEACHERS USE IT?

Team teaching or faculty teaming is an educational practice that has been around for so long it hardly receives attention anymore. Yet, each year it is introduced into many schools for the first time, either as an independent innovation or as a component of a larger program such as Individually Guided Education (IGE). Before beginning faculty teaming, teachers usually receive a day or two of inservice preparation; and during the course of the first year, they may receive another day or two. Beyond this, it seems that little assistance is given to teachers in relation to the process of teaming. Apparently, it is assumed that teachers can effectively use teaming with minimal training. However, formal feedback from many teachers involved in teaming does not support this position. For many teachers, teaming is a compelling, sometimes consuming, endeavor.

Because we believe teaming is a very complex task requiring much of teachers, the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education at the University of Texas at Austin is currently engaged in a research project that took a careful

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look at what really happens to teachers when they implement teaming. This research is based on the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) (Hall, Wallace, and Dossett, 1973) which has as its two major dimensions Levels of Use (LoU) and Stages of Concern (SoC). More specifically, the model focuses on each individual teacher (user), how that teacher uses an innovation and what concerns s/he has regarding it. Team teaching is one of several innovations investigated as part of this research.

A basic premise of the research is that the adoption of an innovation is not a point in time but a process that develops over an extended period. Following on this premise, the model predicts that as users go through the adoption process there will be identifiable and measurable changes in their concerns about and use of the innovation. Accordingly, the model proposes eight possible Levels of Use (LoU) and seven Stages of Concern (SoC) a person may manifest in relation to innovation adoption. This report is concerned only with the Levels of Use dimension of the model. A later report will deal with the Stages of Concern. (For a complete description of the LoU dimension, the reader is referred to Hall, Loucks, Rutherford and Newlove, 1975.)

Common to all Levels of Use are seven categories that represent behaviors a user at any level might be expected to demonstrate. These categories are Knowledge, Acquiring Information, Sharing, Assessing, Planning, Status Reporting, and Performing. It is assumed that information provided by the user relative to each of these categories will make it possible to assign that user to a Level of Use of a specific innovation. The model does not assume that each individual will pass through all eight levels or that they will be at the same level in all categories. Neither does the model assume that an individual will move through the levels in a linear fashion. What the model does assume is that at any point in time, the use level of an individual innovation can be identified and over time, change can be measured.

The Study

Through the use of personal interviews and limited observations, we collected information about teaming from 411 teachers in thirty-nine schools in three states. The teachers in these schools ranged from those not involved in teaming to those who had been teaming for five or more years. Of course, the latter group of teachers no longer saw teaming as an innovation. This range of teachers was necessary to determine if all the predicted Levels of Use did indeed exist.

Findings -- Levels of Use

Data now available from this study indicate that not only do Levels of Use exist, but they can be identified and are generally consonant with the described model. The remainder of this report describes the Level of Use patterns that were found.

Usually Level 0 teachers made it quite clear they were not involved in teaming and had no plans to become involved or to learn more about it. When asked about the strengths and weaknesses of teaming, their answers were vague and reflected little knowledge about it. In some cases teachers would have some knowledge of teaming and would even suggest they might try it someday. Yet, they were neither making plans nor taking action to move in the direction of use.

Teachers who were at Level I reflected an active interest in teaming, and had acquired or were acquiring information about it. These learning activities may have been some type of inservice training, reading of descriptive materials, talking or listening to others, or observing teaming in action. Some persons at this level had only limited information about teaming, but they had definite plans for learning more. Descriptions of teaming usually included some of its salient characteristics and some insight into its strengths and weaknesses. Persons at this level often expressed an intention to use the innovation, but they

had not identified a time when they would actually begin.

Whereas Level I teachers were contemplating the use of teaming, Level II teachers had decided to use the innovation (or it was decided for them), and they had established a time when use would begin. Teachers at this level were involved, formally or informally, in preparation for use of teaming. When discussing teaming, the teachers dwelt more on the strengths than the weaknesses. They were able to provide quite a few details about the characteristics of team teaching and their anticipated roles as team members. Comments on teaming were usually positive, except in instances where teachers felt they were being administratively "pushed" into teaming. Comments by these teachers tended to be negative or guarded in nature.

Virtually all innovation adopters are in Level III, the mechanical level, as they begin use of an innovation. Some remain at this level for extended time periods, while others change in a relatively short time. The teachers we interviewed who were at this level were especially bothered by the amount of time teaming required. Additionally, they were having some difficulty keeping track of their pupils and coordinating materials and work with team members.

Planning at Level III usually focused on the logistical matters of the next few days rather than on the needs of the pupils. Information about teaming that these teachers were seeking also related to management needs, i.e., how to reduce time spent in meetings and how to arrive at a workable time schedule for the school day. Changes being made in the teaming process dealt with management and logistical matters and primarily to ease teacher frustrations. Perhaps the most interesting thing about teachers at this level was the amount of talking they did without divulging much useful or specific information concerning their use of teaming. Apparently these teachers had not yet developed a clear understanding of how teaming works and their role in the team.

In our sample, more teachers were at Level IVA than any other level. These were the teachers who had conquered the logistical and personal problems of teaming and had settled into a routine use of it. There was little or no evaluation of teaming going on, unless it was administratively required, and there were no changes occurring in the teaming process. Planning at this level did not propose change in the routine team operation. Generally, teachers at this level were not looking for information about teaming with others.

At this level we identified two types of teachers, even though they were both routine in their use of teaming. On the one hand, there were teachers who were routine in all they did as teachers, and they seemingly desired to keep it that way. Their plans involved no serious consideration of how they might modify the teaming effort or their own teaching in the future. In essence, they were content to continue doing that which was comfortable.

On the other hand, there were teachers at this level who were excited, active, and planning ahead in their own individual teaching roles, but they were using teaming in a routine manner. In other words, these teachers changed constantly in their roles as teachers independent of the team structure, but they were not involved in making changes in the way the team functioned.

Occasionally we found teams that had reached a very effective Level of Use and then stabilized their use to "catch their breath" before considering new ideas. The number of teachers we identified at Levels IVB, V, and VI was quite small, although one might expect, at least hope, that most teachers would be at one of these levels. Two key characteristics identified teachers at these levels. One, they were involved in changes in the way the team functioned, or they were changing their own teaching pattern based on input from the team effort. Two, these changes were being made for the benefit of the children. The latter characteristic is the important one, for it distinguishes Level IVB teachers from those at Level III, who

make change in the team process principally for their own security and sanity.

From our information to date, it appears that teachers view the team as an administrative or management (sometimes social) unit that has little direct relation to their teaching performance. This was supported by teacher comments and by the fact that there were many teachers who were changing their independent teaching activities for the benefit of children but were in no way involved in team changes. For some of these teachers the team seemed to serve no real function, and they felt the time they had to devote to team efforts, such as team meetings, tended to limit their personal teaching effectiveness. At the same time, a great many teachers viewed the exchange of ideas in team meetings and in formally throughout each day as being highly beneficial.

Teachers at Level V were those who were reaching out to teachers or teams beyond their own in an effort to develop an integrated or unified program within the school. For the few who were doing this, it involved efforts such as sharing children or teachers across teams, or working with others to adjust or adapt the curriculum to allow for a smoother, more orderly progression of pupil learning.

Level V teamers were rare. It appears that, for the most part, teams within a school operated virtually independent of each other. Team leaders met together on a regular basis in many schools, but these meetings dealt with administrative and organizational matters or the needs of individual teams, and had virtually no influence on integrated instructional efforts across teams.

Level VI teachers were those who were contemplating significant changes in the way they were teaming, or even the replacement of teaming with a completely different innovation. These contemplations were based on the teacher's desire to find a better program for children, not a desire to get away from something they disliked.

Several reasons may account for the fact that we did not find many teachers at this level. Most interesting of these is the fact that teachers by and large felt that changes in their school were promoted by administrators and were not initiated by teachers. Consequently, teachers just did not think in terms of significant changes they might make. This attitude was equally prevelant among teachers highly positive toward teaming and those who participated with reservations.

Another reason for the lack of Level VI people was that many teachers had such a limited knowledge of teaming that they were unaware of the options open to them. Over and over teachers would say things such as, "I am not sure that what we are doing is really teaming," "I don't know if we are teaming right or not," or "I understand that to really be teaming we should be doing _____ and we aren't." Teachers were invariably seeking to find out how other teams were functioning.

The short life of Level VI behavior may also be a reason for our finding few teachers at this level. Once a teacher actually made a Level VI type change, s/he immediately reverted back to another level in relation to the new process. That teacher may have been at Level VI for a relatively short period of time, and we simply did not interview him/her during that period. We did identify some teachers who had recently been at and passed through Level VI. Few were their numbers, however.

This finding regarding the lack of teacher involvement in renewal type of change raises many questions about the source and purpose of change in schools, but I will reserve that discussion for a future paper.

Findings -- Types of Teams

When we began our study of team teaching, it was simply assumed that it was a unitary concept, that when one talked with teachers about teaming, every-

one would share the same understanding of the concept. Quickly that assumption was proven wrong. Among teachers involved in team teaching, there was no common definition or description of teaming, and for good reason. In practice, teaming takes on many shapes. From the data collected in this study, nine different types or patterns of teaming were discovered. Those patterns are described below.

Patterns of Teaming

Type 1: -- A team (or unit) of three to five teachers share a common group of students and most, if not all, students have some contact with each teacher during the course of the day. Each teacher teaches all subjects, but to different groups of children. Much of the instructional planning in the team is done cooperatively, although each teacher maintains his or her own particular teaching style and is ultimately responsible for the content of the subjects he or she teachers. Children are easily and commonly shifted from one group to another as their needs require.

Type 2: -- Teams are much the same as Type 1, except that certain instructional activities are planned for the entire team by one person. For example, one teacher might plan a two-week unit on science that is taught by all teachers. All teachers have responsibility for planning such a unit in some subject areas.

Type 3: -- Teams have much the same organizational pattern and regular interaction as Types 1 and 2, but teaching assignments are based more on skills than on subject areas. All teachers may be teaching math, but instead of teaching all skills to their group, they may teach only certain math skills, i.e., division or subtraction. In this pattern, students

move from level to level as their skill needs change, and the skills a teacher teaches change as pupil needs require

Type 4: -- Teams are organizationally the same as Types 1 - 3. In this pattern, however, cooperative planning does not necessarily encompass all the teaching activities of the team. Instead, there is one common endeavor, such as an enrichment center or learning center, that accommodates all children in the unit and is planned cooperatively. Teachers decide on the materials and tasks to be included in the center, or the rules for its operation, and on the responsibilities of each teacher relative to the center. Planning for instruction in the various subjects is not usually shared except for the general exchange of ideas.

Type 5: -- Teams meet together regularly and share a common group of children, but they do little cooperative planning beyond sharing general ideas or providing support for each other. Sometimes these teams establish some team standards, such as how to discipline children, that they plan cooperatively.

Type 6: -- Teams vary from those above in that they do not share a common group of students. Early in the year, children are assigned out to various teachers, usually on the basis of achievement level, and they usually remain in that group for the remainder of the year. It is possible for a child to be moved from one teacher to another, but few are shifted. In this pattern, a child is usually taught by at least two teachers in the team, but never goes to all team members. When these teams meet, their discussions usually center around matters such as scheduling, administrative details or resources that concern the entire team.

Type 7: -- This is a less frequently noted teaming pattern. These teams get together principally for the identifying and sharing of ideas and resources. They share no children, and team members generally function independently of each other, except for the sharing of resources. Occasionally, they will shift an individual child from one teacher to another.

Type 8: -- In this pattern, two (or more) teachers teach one group of children at the same time. Interestingly, many teachers seemed to feel that this type of teaching is the true model of teaming, but we found very few who did this.

Type 9: -- This is an organizational pattern that was found to some degree in all of the above patterns. When teams are large in number -- usually six or more -- there is a tendency to form two or three sub-teams. When this is done, the sub-teams become virtually independent of each other except for meeting together for administrative purposes.

Discussion and Implications

Teachers do indeed vary in the way they use teaming. We found this variation within teams, as well as within schools. Information on the statistical correlation between years of use and Level of Use is not yet avaiable, but we do know that it varies according to circumstances. Some teachers who had been teaming for several years were at Level III, the mechanical level. On the other hand, some new teachers who were assigned to a team that was already functioning smoothly soon began to function in a similar manner. We also found instances where individuals within a smoothly operating team reverted back to a mechanical Level of Use when a new element, such as a non-compatible member, was introduced.

One finding of particular interest relates to the time required to develop an effective level of teaming. When teams are formed from teachers with no pre-

vious teaming experience, it seems to take about three years for them to develop the teaming process to an efficient and effective level. When team size was greater than three, this was especially true.

It is clear from our research that teaming is indeed a complex process. Teachers need long-term assistance if they are to make it work effectively and efficiently; however, many of the teachers in the teaming study reported they had received, at the most, only a day or two of training in teaming before they started, and it had not been very helpful. Furthermore, they strongly felt the need for more assistance. This implies that inservice training must be much more intense and spread over a longer time period, as well as more individualized. For teachers to vary in their Levels of Use of an innovation appears to be a normal happening. In inservice training these variations should be accepted and respected rather than ignored, or even worse, condemned.

Perhaps the single most important implication form our study is that in order to determine how an innovation is being used, one cannot make assessments at the district level, or even the school level, but must go directly to the individual users, the teachers.

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